

Some Questions on Taqlid

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Questions with Short Answers

1. Is it compulsory to be a Muqallid (follower of an authoritative scholar)?

No, if you have the ability for ijtihād. Yes, if you do not have.

2. Is there no hope of salvation in the Hereafter without Taqlid (following an authoritative scholar)?

There is no redemption only when you do neither Taqlid nor Ijtihād.

3. Has Allāh's Prophet ﷺ commanded us to become Muqallid?

Yes, to the people not blessed with the ability of Ijtihād.

4. Whose Taqlīd did the Sahābah do?

The Sahābah who could not do Ijtihād followed those who could.

5. Whose Taqlīd did the Muslims before these four Imāms of Jurisprudence do? And if they didn't do Taqlīd, how will they escape the fire of Hell?

The Ijtihād-ineligible Muslims used to follow the teachers of those four Imāms who were Tab'e Tābī'is, Tābī'is and Sahābah.

Ijtihad: It is extraction of rulings not explicitly stated in the Qurān and Hadīths by pondering over the relevant texts of the Qurān and Hadīth.

In our times, only a person who has sufficient knowledge of the Qurān, Hadīth, Tafsīr, Usūle Tafsīr, Usūle Hadīth, Asmāur Rijāl, Usūle Fiqh, 'Arabic language and literature of the Prophet's days (not of this day), is eligible to do Ijtihād.

Questions with Long Answers

1. Is it compulsory to be a Muqallid (follower of an authoritative scholar)?

That depends. If you have enough knowledge of the Qurān, Hadīth, Tafsīr, Usūle Tafsīr, Usūle Hadīth, Asmāur Rijāl, Usūle Fiqh, Arabic language and literature of the Prophet's days (not of this day), if you have sufficient amount of piety that would prevent you from obeying your own whims instead of the letter and spirit of the Shari'ah, if you are blessed with abundance of time and patience miraculous dexterity at research that would let you search for the evidences for all the acts of Salāh before the time of the next Salāh comes up, being Muqallid is not for you.

If the above paragraph looks mind-boggling or confusing, or incomprehensible, or if you are a lesser mortal like the rest of us, it is compulsory to be a Muqallid.

2. Is there no hope of salvation in the Hereafter without Taqlīd (following an authoritative scholar)?

Ahle Hadīth and Ahle Sunnah: the Distance, the Difference

If you belong to the first category, there is no salvation and najāt without Ijtihād, ie finding out the rulings yourself by collating, considering and pondering over the vast textual resource base for each and every ruling of the Shariah. If you belong to the second category, there is no salvation and success without Taqlid.

3. Has Allāh's Prophet ﷺ commanded us to become Muqallid?

Allāh and His Prophet gave both the commands: to become Mujtahid, and to become Muqallid. Every person has to follow either of the two commands. There is no option for neither or both.

Allāh's Prophet compliments Hazrat Mu'āz upon his readiness for Ijtihād

Allāh's Prophet ﷺ sent Hazrat Mu'āz ibn Jabal رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ to Yemen as Qāzī and teacher. He asked Hazrat Mu'āz how he would adjudicate cases there. Hazrat Mu'āz said he would base his verdicts on the Qurān, then on the Hadīth, and if neither had a direct

عَنِ الْخَارِثِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو ابْنِ أَخِي الْمُغِيرَةِ بْنِ شُعْبَةَ، عَنْ أَنَسٍ مِنْ أَهْلِ جَمُوصٍ، مِنْ أَصْحَابِ مُعَاذِ بْنِ جَبَلٍ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَمَّا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَبْعَثَ مُعَاذًا إِلَى الْيَمَنِ قَالَ: «كَيْفَ تَقْضِي إِذَا عَرَضَ لَكَ قَضَاءٌ؟»، قَالَ: أَقْضِي بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: فَإِنْ لَمْ تَجِدْ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ؟»، قَالَ: فَيَسْتَنِي رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، قَالَ: «فَإِنْ لَمْ تَجِدْ فِي سُنَّةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، وَلَا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ؟»، قَالَ: أَجْتَهِدُ رَأْيِي، وَلَا أَلُو. فَضَرَبَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ صَدْرَهُ، وَقَالَ: «الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي وَفَّقَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لِمَا يُرْضِي رَسُولَ اللَّهِ». (أَبُو دَاوُدَ: ٣٥٩٢)

Some companions of Hazrat Mu'āz ibn Jabal رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said: When Allāh's Prophet ﷺ intended to send Mu'āz ibn Jabal to Yemen, he asked: **How will you judge when the occasion of deciding a case arises?**

He replied: I shall judge in accordance with Allāh's Book.

The Prophet asked: (What will you do) **if you do not find any guidance in Allāh's Book?**

He replied: (I shall act) in accordance with the Sunnah (tradition) of Allāh's Prophet ﷺ.

He asked: (What will you do) **if you do not find any guidance in the Sunnah of Allāh's Prophet ﷺ nor in Allāh's Book?**

He replied: **I shall do my best to form an opinion and I shall spare no effort.**

Allāh's Prophet ﷺ then patted him on his breast and said: **Thanks to Allāh Who has guided His Messenger's messenger to the path which pleases His Messenger!**

(Abū Dāwūd: 3592)

Ahle Hadīth and Ahle Sunnah: the Distance, the Difference

ruling, he would do his utmost to form an opinion on his own. The answer pleased Allāh's Prophet ﷺ so much that he heartily complimented Hazrat Mu'āz.

All the Mujtahids right from the time of Hazrat Mu'āz ibn Jabal and other noble Sahābah, during the days of the Seven Jurist Tabi'is of Madīnah, in the period of the four great Imāms, and up to the centuries of later jurists and scholars have only acted on the above Hadīth of Allāh's Prophet ﷺ.

Allāh's Prophet commands the common men to do Taqlīd

As for the common men who can not devote themselves 24X7 to the study of Islāmic sciences, the Prophet urges them to ask. In the accompanying Hadīth the Prophet does not enjoin them to “do their best and form an opinion based on the Qurān and Hadīth”. They are commanded to ask and follow. That is Taqlīd. The common men from the days of the Sahābah till today have acted upon this.

4. Whose Taqlīd did the Sahābah do?

The common Sahābah were muqallids of the mujtahid Sahābah. So were the Tabi'is and all the Muslims later on.

عَنْ جَابِرٍ قَالَ: خَرَجْنَا فِي سَفَرٍ فَأَصَابَ رَجُلًا مِنَّا حَجَرٌ فَشَجَّهُ فِي رَأْسِهِ، ثُمَّ اخْتَلَمَ فَسَأَلَ أَصْحَابَهُ فَقَالَ: هَلْ تَجِدُونَ لِي رُخْصَةً فِي التَّيَمُّمِ؟ فَقَالُوا: مَا نَجِدُ لَكَ رُخْصَةً وَأَنْتَ تَقْدِرُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ فَاغْتَسَلْ فَمَاتَ، فَلَمَّا قَدِمْنَا عَلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَخْبَرَ بِذَلِكَ فَقَالَ: «قَتَلُوهُ قَتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَلَا سَأَلُوا إِذْ لَمْ يَعْلَمُوا فَإِنَّمَا شِفَاءُ الْعِيِّ السُّؤَالُ، إِنَّمَا كَانَ يَكْفِيهِ أَنْ يَتَيَمَّمَ وَيَعْصِرَ - أَوْ» يَعْصِبُ «شَاكَ مُوسَى - عَلَى جُرْحِهِ حَرْقَةً، ثُمَّ يَمْسَحُ عَلَيْهَا وَيَغْسِلُ سَائِرَ جَسَدِهِ» (أَبُو دَاوُدَ: ٣٣٦)

Hazrat Jābir رضي الله عنه narrates: We went on an expedition during which one of our companions was struck with a stone in his head. He then had a wet dream (which necessitates bath for purification). He enquired his companions if it was permissible for him to do Tayammum instead of bathing. They stated there could be no permission for Tayammum when he was capable of using water. The wounded Sahābī took bath and died.

When we returned to the Prophet ﷺ, he got the report of the incident. He voiced his displeasure, “**These people have killed him! May Allāh kill them! When they did not know the ruling, why didn't they ask others? After all, the solution for ignorance is enquiry. It would have been sufficient for him to do Tayammum, bandage his wound, wipe his hands over it, and wash the rest of his body.**”

(Abū Dāwūd: 3592)

The Mujtahid Sahābah:

According to Allāmah Ibn Qayyim Al Jauziyyah (d. 751 AH), they were 130+ men and women. Out of them seven were more prolific in Ijtihād: Hazrat 'Umar ibn Al Khattāb, 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib, 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd, 'Āishah (the Mother of Believers), Zaid ibn Thābit, 'Abdullāh ibn Abbās and 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ. (A'lāmul Muwaqqā'in 1/10)

After the days of the Sahābah too, the common Muslims continued to visit the Mujtahids to get the rulings. In the days of the Tabi'in there were seven jurists in Madīnah who had achieved special acclaim for their ijtihād: Sa'id ibn Al Musayyab, Urwah ibn Zubair, Qāsim ibn Muhammad, Khārijah ibn Zaid, Abū Bakr ibn 'Abdur Rahmān, Sulaimān ibn Yasar, and 'Ubaidullāh ibn 'Utbah.

A little later came the four great Imāms of jurisprudence: Imām Abū Hanīfah (d.150), Mālik bin Anas (d. 179), Muhammad ibn Idrīs Ash Shāfi'i (d. 204), and Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241)

A parallel can be found in the history of the science of Hadīth. In the days of Sahābah, the great Muhaddiths were Abū Hurairah, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, 'Āishah, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn Al 'Ās رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ. Hazrat 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn Al 'Ās even compiled a book in Hadīth: "As Sahīfatus Sādiqah". In the next generation, Imām Muhammad ibn Muslim Zuhri, Sa'id ibn Musayyab and others gained special recognition for teaching Hadīth. Then came the six great Imāms of Hadīth: Bukhārī (256), Muslim (261), Ibn Mājah (273), Abū Dāwūd (275), Tirmizī (279) and Nasāi (303). Till this day, we continue to refer the books of these later Imāms instead of "As Sahīfatus Sādiqah" for the simple reason that "As Sahīfah" is no more available whereas these six books are easy to find.

Similarly, the detailed juristic compilations of the earlier jurists is not available whereas for these four great Imāms of jurisprudence, it is easily available. So, we follow these four.

5. Whose Taqlīd did the Muslims before these four Imāms of Jurisprudence do? And if they didn't do Taqlīd, how will they escape the fire of Hell?

I think the question has been answered already. Before the four Imāms as also after them, the common Muslims followed, obeyed and did Taqlīd. The Mujtahids in all the ages did Ijtihād. The Mujtahids will get salvation due to their Ijtihād, whereas the common Muslims would get salvation and Allāh's mercy due to their Taqlīd.